



AMERICAN CENTER NEWSLETTER

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American Center

Colombo

February 2012

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U.S. Embassy participates in the 'Deyata Kirula' Exhibition



Cutouts of president Obama and secretary Clinton were the most attractive to pose for a photo

U.S. Embassy Colombo hosted a booth at the 'Deyata Kirula' national exhibition held in Anuradhapura from February 4th to 10th. Thousands of people visited the booth and learned about the U.S. Government's activities and projects in Sri Lanka and about U.S. culture and society. The booth was arranged in the style of a small movie theater, with films about America playing on a TV. The films included a

documentary about the golden age of the Hollywood musicals; a documentary about Muhammad Ali; footage from the Harlem Renaissance; a History Channel program about American history; and NBC News' special program about the Obama White House, which proved very popular with visitors, many of whom sat for extended periods to learn about the American president.

The booth also featured a number of giveaway items, including literature about the United States, pencils with American flag designs and USAID-branded water bottles. Many visitors opted to have their photos taken with life-size cutouts of President Obama and Secretary Clinton.

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Upcoming & Current Events

'Murder'

Art Exhibition by Kora Kaputa Centre



The American Center in Colombo is currently holding an art exhibition featuring the work of Kora Kaputa centre.

The Exhibition runs until the April 3, 2012.

Entrance is free!

March 8, 3:00 pm

Public lecture on "A World Free of Violence Against Women" by Mrs. Rocky Ariyaratne at the American Center in Colombo. Will be linked to American Corners in Kandy and Jaffna through DVC.

March 21, 4:30 pm

First program of Panel Discussions on Disability & Ability: Autism at the US-SL Fulbright Commission in Colombo.

March 22, 4:00 pm

'Open Mic Competitive Poetry Slam' "Season 4" at the American Center in Colombo

March 24, 9:30 am

Storytelling program at the American Corner in Kandy. Mr. Roger Morley will read from The Phantom TollBooth by Norton Juster.

March 28, 4:30 pm

Second program of Panel Discussions on Disability & Ability: Rights at the US-SL Fulbright Commission in Colombo.

Panel Discussion Commemorating Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



A section of audience at the discussion

American Center Colombo hosted a panel discussion commemorating Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on February 1, 2012. The discussion was linked with American Corners in Kandy and Jaffna via DVC.

Information Officer Christopher Elms delivered the welcome note. Outreach Officer Hector Gonzalez introduced the panelists and moderated the discussion. The panelists in Colombo were Harshani Bathwadana, a founding member of the university-level peace-building organization Mihasa Foundation; Prashan De Visser, president of the youth-led reconciliation movement Sri Lanka Unites; Nooranie Muthaliph of the Rotaract Club of Panadura; and Kumaravadivel Guruparan, a founding member of preservationist organization Noolaham Foundation. Panelists shared their experience in organizing community development work in rural and urban Sri Lanka with youth volunteers. The panel discussion concluded with a lively Q&A session with the audience.

IRC, Colombo Educates Sri Lankans on Nutrition and Nutritional Values of Functional Foods

On February 21, Dr. Renuka Silva, Senior Lecturer at Department of Applied Nutrition at the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka and President of the Nutrition Society of Sri Lanka, delivered a public lecture on the topic, "Do Functional Foods Have a Role to Play in Promoting a Long and Healthy Life?" at the American Center Colombo. The speaker discussed his research, taking some examples of functional foods such as grains, some fruits, and some vegetables.



American Center auditorium was full with participants including school students came for listening the lecture

The lecture was well attended by some nutritionists, health sector employees, and school students. The Q&A session was very interactive.

Panel Discussion: Inspiring and Empowering Youth through Music



Panelists from L to R: Soundarie David Rodrigo, Lilanka Botejue and Anushka Fernando Goonetilleke from Soul Sounds; Ramya De Livera Perera, Pianist/Music Teacher; Shalini Wickramasuriya, Chairperson of Music Cares foundation Sri Lanka

On February 15, the American Center hosted a panel discussion on 'Inspiring and Empowering Youth Through Music' with the participation of five

panelists: Soundarie David Rodrigo, founder and director of the Sri Lankan choir 'Soul Sounds'; choir members Lilanka Botejue and Anushka Fernando-Goonetilleke; Ramya De Livera Perera, a leading pianist and well known music teacher; and Shalini Wickramasuriya, chairperson of Music Cares Foundation Sri Lanka. American Center Director Christopher Teal gave the opening remarks, and Outreach Officer Hector Gonzalez introduced the panelists. The panelists shared their passion for music, which they described as a universal language that transcends barriers. Music Cares is currently using music as a way to bring together children of Kurunegala and Thunukkai (North) by build orchestral communities modeled on the famous program El Sistema.

The program was linked to the American Corner in Jaffna through DVC.

American Center conducts Social Media Training in Matara



Participants pose with Embassy officials

On February 21, 2012, the American Center conducted a social media training workshop at Kamburupitiya for Prathiba Media Network, which is a small-scale youth community group that publishes a local magazine. Members are between 16 to 25 years old. Forty-two participants attended

the workshop, and most of them were new to social media.

This workshop gave them skills and tools they can use to strengthen and sustain their communities and educate themselves as they connect with the larger world. The workshop also helped improve the ability of youth to identify local issues and develop strategies for addressing them through social media, and encouraged them to be citizen journalists for their local issues.

The American Center strives to encourage positive youth development and hence tailors its efforts to address the unique needs of rural youth. It also aims to develop the life skills and experience that Sri Lanka's youth need to emerge as effective leaders and contributing members of society.

IRC Colombo Enhances Reading among Young Children

With the main objective of developing a taste for reading in young adults and strengthening their reading skills, the American Center Library has been conducting a monthly reading club named "Readers Are Leaders" since January 2010. Several American Officers attached to the U. S. Embassy Colombo and their family members read to children at the reading clubs. The February 2012 Reading Club was held on February 25 at the American Center Colombo.



Deborah Johnston read to kids from
The Ant Bully

Deborah Johnston read *The Ant Bully*. Afterwards, the film version was screened.

U. S. Embassy Felicitates Young Photographers of Sri Lanka



Winners with Christopher Teal, Director, American Center

In addition to the "Learn About America" Essay Competition held in the Junior Observer, the

American Center Colombo initiated a photography competition in 2011. The photography competition for November/December was held on the theme "A New Day." Among the hundreds of photos, a panel of judges chose first, second and third places under three age categories: 12-14 year olds; 15-16 year olds and 17-18 year olds. The winners received their awards on February 24, 2012 at the American Center. Public Affairs Officer Christopher Teal graced the occasion as the chief guest of the event. The winners, together with their parents and family members, were present at the event. Winners will be highlighted in an upcoming issue of the Junior Observer.

A photo gallery of the winning photographs has been posted on Embassy [Facebook page](#).

American Corner Jaffna Hosts a Youth Forum



Youth Forum Members in Jaffna

The Youth Forum in Jaffna was held on February 23rd hosted by the American Corner to facilitate

youth coming together to discuss social issues that has an impact on their daily lives. Public Affairs Officer Christopher Teal spoke to the members via DVC from Colombo welcoming them and requesting that they come up with ideas for social engagement that members could initiate to benefit the people in Jaffna. Ms. Thevaranchany Sivaskaran, Head of the Management Department at the University of Jaffna led the discussion with a presentation on 'Child Labor.' The next meeting is scheduled for March 14th 2012 on the topic 'Career Guidance.'

Public Lecture on "Nineteenth Century American Medical Missionaries in Jaffna"

On January 12, the American Corner in Jaffna hosted a public lecture on "Nineteenth Century American Medical Missionaries in Jaffna" by Mr. Thiru Arumugam, Chartered Electrical Engineer, Rtd. Principal Engineer with Montgomery Watson Harza, USA.



Shiranee Mills, principal of Uduvil Girls' School in Jaffna introduced the speaker to audience

'Deyata Kirula' Exhibition

The officers at the booth also conducted trivia competitions for groups of children.

The booth at Deyata Kirula gave the US Embassy a great opportunity to meet with Sri Lankans, many

From page 1

of whom expressed curiosity about the United States and its culture. The posters on the walls, which depicted scenes from American life, encouraged discussion between the officers and the public.



The Embassy booth attracted many including Buddhist monks



Carol Gresham, Office Management Specialist is answering questions from the visitors to booth

USAID Helps Trincomalee Food Producers Secure Certification



Participants receive their certificates from USAID.

Identified as a strategic sector by USAID, the U.S. Embassy's development arm, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in employment growth, income generation, and poverty alleviation. After attending seminar, three Trincomalee food producers received certificates for good manufacturing practices under the Sri Lanka Standards Code for food hygiene on January 11. The certificates will help the producers gain new access to markets, meaning higher profits.

"I never even dreamt of getting this certificate: USAID provided me with tremendous support, encouragement and guidance," said Sisira Sweets owner, K. G. Ranjith Sisira Kumara. Kumara ran his business from a makeshift hut before the recent training provided by the USAID, but now maintains hygienic work spaces. Sisira Sweets and over 30 other SMEs attended a USAID-supported seminar on "Increasing Market Access by Upgrading Your Business with Required Standards."

However, many Sri Lankan SMEs think certification is beyond their reach and too costly. "The aim of this initiative was to encourage SME certification by clarifying its benefits and explaining how it is acquired," said James F Bednar, Mission Director for USAID Sri Lanka. Certified food producers enjoy improved access to supermarkets and other outlets, resulting in higher sales and profits, and more secure jobs for employees. SMEs in other lines of business may see comparable benefits, which flow through to their suppliers in the form of increased sales.

U.S. Government Supports Tourism Development in Sri Lanka



Hon Basil Rajapaksa and James F. Bednar, USAID Mission Director, glance through the manuals during the launch.

At a ceremony on January 30, the United States Agency for International Development helped launch Sri Lanka's first "Tourism Roadside Signage Guidelines." USAID simultaneously released a manual, "Start Your Tourism Business," designed to assist hospitality sector entrepreneurs. Both publications, developed as part of USAID's Connecting Regional Economies (CORE) Project, will boost Sri Lanka's rapidly growing tourism industry, as part of USAID's wider effort to bolster Sri Lanka's private sector development.

Tourism roadside signage plays a key role in making Sri Lanka a visitor-friendly destination. Effective road signage may draw visitors into exploring a town or attraction instead of just driving past and also improves the overall visitor experience, making it easier and safer for tourists to find key sites, facilities and services. Meanwhile, the "Start Your Tourism Business" program targets small and medium enterprises, providing guidance on successfully starting and maintaining a tourism business.

Speaking at the launch, USAID Sri Lanka's Mission Director James F. Bednar said, "There is no doubt that these manuals will give an important boost to Sri Lanka's rapidly growing tourism industry. And such initiatives exemplify USAID's ongoing efforts to expand economic opportunity in Sri Lanka's communities."

Transition to the new signage is already happening. The Trincomalee Municipal Council and the Eastern Provincial Council have allocated funds for the signage, while the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) and the World Bank-supported Sustainable Tourism Project have endorsed using the guidelines throughout Sri Lanka.

Monthly Essay Competition



**Learn about
America**



Essay Competition for School Children on the theme of Learn About America

The American Center has organized an essay competition for school children which is published in Junior Observer of the Sunday Observer.

The monthly essay topic is for children in three age categories 12-14 years, 15-16 years and 17-18 years.

Each age group is given a monthly topic related to the United States of America and is asked to write an essay with a minimum word count. The students can conduct research for their essay at the American Center Library in Colombo, at American Corners in Kandy and Oluvil, or from sources on IIP Digital, a very good internet resource with

information on the United States, its culture, history, literature, politics, tourist attractions and much more.

The first three winners in each age group will be given a selection of American books, a lifetime membership to the American Center Library, and a certificate signed by the U.S. Ambassador. A prize giving ceremony will be held at the American Center Colombo every two months.

Essay topics for March/April are as follows:

Commemorating Women's History Month

12-14 years: Contributions of Women in Development of a Country (500 words)

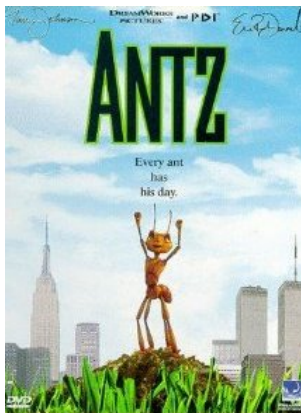
15-16 years: Women's Education - Women's Empowerment (750 words)

17-18 years: The role of the society in making a world free of violence against women (1000 words)

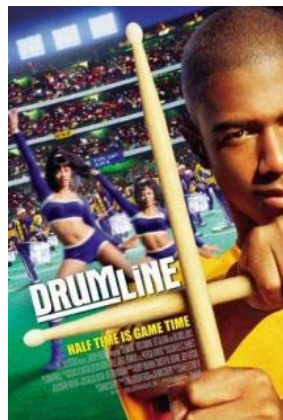
Please see the Junior Observer of the Sunday Observer for more details.

Movies for Youth at the American Center

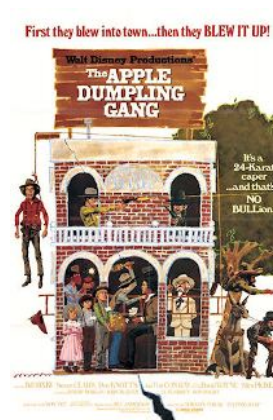
**March 10
3:30 pm
ANTZ**



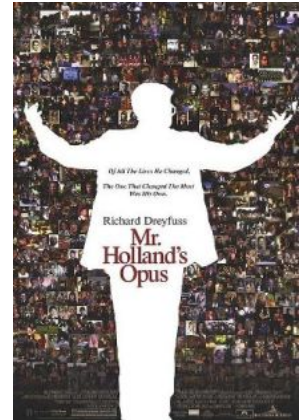
**March 17
3:30 pm
DRUMLINE**



**March 24
3:30 pm
THE APPLE
DUMPLING GANG**



**March 31
3:30 pm
MR. HOLLAND'S
OPUS**



March 2012

March 13 - Anatomy of a Murder (1959, 160 minutes)

Duke Ellington's legendary score is just one of the many highlights in this sensational courtroom drama. An innkeeper is murdered by an Army lieutenant; he confesses to the murder but the pieces don't all fit together. As his lawyers work to defend him they dig deeper into a world of slippery truths and moral ambiguity, where nobody is to be trusted and nothing is what it seems. With James Stewart, George C. Scott, Ben Gazzara; directed by Otto Preminger.

March 20 - On the Waterfront (1954, 108 minutes)

In this story about a citizen's responsibility in the face of corruption, Marlon Brando stars as Terry Malloy, a former boxer now working as a longshoreman, a business controlled by organized crime. The dockworkers refuse to cooperate with a police investigation, but as he learns more and more about the corruption on the docks, Terry's conscience demands that he do something. Elia Kazan's politically charged drama won eight Academy Awards, including Best Picture, and remains a classic, with one of Brando's most courageous performances.

March 27 - Hannah and Her Sisters (1986, 103 minutes)

Woody Allen is at his absolute best in this rich story of a large and complicated family. Hannah, a successful actress with a perfect life, provides emotional support for her charming alcoholic parents and for her sisters Lee and Holly, who struggle to find a purpose in life, but her own 'perfect' life is threatened by love affairs and deep-seated resentments. Funny and deeply moving, with magnificent performances by Mia Farrow, Barbara Hershey, Max von Sydow, and Michael Caine.

Movies start promptly at 6:00pm every Tuesday. Seating is limited and is first-come, first-served. Please contact the American Center at amcentersl@state.gov or at (11) 249-8146 with any questions. Entrance free !

